

Message Text

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ACTION HA-02

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9221

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BANGKOK 23043

CORRECTED COPY PARA #5 OMMITED LINE

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF, SHUM, TH, CB
SUBJECT: ALLEGED MISTREATMENT OF CAMBODIANS IN THAI
REFUGEE CAMPS

REF: A. STATE 200615, B. BANGKOK 22776

1. AS A FOLLOW-UP TO THE CHARGES LISTED IN REF A, THE
REFUGEE COORDINATOR CALLED AUGUST 10 ON LESLIE A.
GOODYEAR, UNHCR REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR WESTERN
SOUTH ASIA. DAVID JAMIESON, UNHCR FIELD OFFICER WHO
COVERS THE KHMER CAMPS, WAS ALSO PRESENT. THEIR COMMENTS
FOLLOW.

2. LACK OF SAFETY FOR KHMER REFUGEES IN THAILAND AND
THEIR BRUTAL TREATMENT IN THAI CAMPS: GOODYEAR SAYS
THERE IS A NECESSARY RISK IN TRYING TO CROSS A BORDER
AND BECOME A REFUGEE. SINCE MANY PEOPLE IN ARANYAPRATHET
DISTRICT WERE VICTIMS OF KHMER ROUGE ATTACKS, LOCAL
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VILLAGERS ENCOUNTERING BORDER CROSSERS MAY HAVE TAKEN
HARSH ACTIONS AGAINST SOME OF THEM. UNCONFIRMED
REPORTS ALLEGE THAT MANY GROUPS OF KHMER CROSSING
PRINCIPALLY INTO THA PHRAYA DISTRICT--WERE KILLED BY
THAI VILLAGERS, LOCAL FORCES, POLICE, OR MILITARY FROM
NOVEMBER 1977 THROUGH JANUARY 1978. THAT TIME SPAN WAS
AT THE HEIGHT OF THAI/KHMER BORDER TENSIONS THAT

RESULTED IN SEVERE DEPRADATIONS TO THAI VILLAGERS ALONG THE BORDER.

3. ALLEGED THAI MILITARY CONTROL OF THE ARANYAPRATHET CAMP AND THE "FEROCIOUS AND RACIAL ATTITUDE" OF THE SOLDIERS: THE ARANYAPRATHET DISTRICT OFFICER, A MINISTRY OF INTERIOR OFFICIAL, RUNS THE ARANYAPRATHET CAMP. HE USES LIMITED NUMBERS OF MEN FROM HIS VOLUNTEER DEFENSE CORPS (VDC) PLATOON TO PROTECT THE CAMP. THE VDC ARE A DISTRICT MILITIA, NOT REGULAR ARMY SOLDIERS.

4. MALES ARE BEATEN TO DEATH AT THE ARANYAPRATHET CAMP FOR MINOR TRANSGRESSIONS. FOREIGN DIGNITARIES AND THE PRESS PAY MORE VISITS TO THE ARANYAPRATHET CAMP THAN ANY OF THE OTHER 14 UNHCR-SUPPORTED CAMPS IN THAILAND. GOODYEAR IS CONFIDENT THAT INCIDENTS OF MAJOR MALTREATMENT WOULD COME TO UNHCR ATTENTION, AS WAS THE CASE OF THE EIGHT WHO DISAPPEARED LAST FALL. (PARAGRAPH 4 OF REF B CITES THE DISAPPEARANCE OF EIGHT PERSONS FROM THE ARANYAPRATHET CAMP. THAT INCIDENT TOOK PLACE ON THE NIGHT OF NOVEMBER 8, 1977, NOT IN EARLY 1978 AS LISTED IN REF B.) POLICE ESCORTED THE EIGHT FROM THE CENTER OF THE CAMP AT ABOUT 2100 HOURS. THE SUBSEQUENT RUMOR WAS THAT AT ABOUT 2200 HOURS THE SAME EVENING AN UNDISCLOSED NUMBER OF CAMBODIANS, WHO WERE ACCUSED OF BEING KHMER ROUGE INFILTRATORS AND WERE BEING DETAINED IN THE ARMY CONFIDENTIAL

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BASE AT ARANYAPRATHET, WERE TAKEN TO A SITE NEAR THE BASE AND WERE SHOT. A NUMBER OF REFUGEES LIVING IN TOWN CONFIRMED THAT SHOOTING OCCURRED ABOUT 2200 HOURS THAT EVENING, AND THAT THE NOISE CAME FROM THE DIRECTION OF THE MILITARY BASE. AN UNIDENTIFIED INFORMANT SAID THAT THE BODIES WERE TAKEN TO A LOCATION ABOUT FIVE KILOMETERS FROM ARANYAPRATHET AND BURIED IN A LARGE HOLE NEAR A TEMPLE.

5. THE ONLY OTHER KNOWN SUCH INCIDENT SINCE NOVEMBER, 1977, WAS THE SHOOTING OF SAM PAO ABOUT 0400 HOURS, JUNE 19. A GROUP OF REFUGEES IN THE ARANYAPRATHET CAMP ASKED THE VDC TO DETAIN SAM PAO AND THREE OTHERS. ALL FOUR WERE KNOWN TROUBLEMAKERS WHO NORMALLY LIVED OUTSIDE THE CAMP. THE RUMOR WAS THAT THEY HAD PREVIOUSLY KILLED A YOUNG WOMAN IN THE CAMP AND ALSO SHOT A POLICEMAN FROM WATTHANA NAKHON, A TOWN 22 KILOMETERS WEST OF ARANYAPRATHET. THE VDC SURROUNDED THE HUT IN WHICH THE FOUR WERE STAYING, AND ASKED THAT SAM PAO HAND OVER THE PISTOL HE WAS CARRYING. THE FOUR TRIED TO RESIST BY BRANDISHING A HAND GRENADE, AND THE VDC SHOT AND KILLED SAM PAO AND ARRESTED THE OTHER THREE. AT THE TIME OFF

HIS DEATH, SAM PAO WAS CARRYING THE GUN OF THE POLICEMAN WHO HAD BEEN KILLED IN WATTHANA NAKHON. UNHCR OFFICIALS WHO VISITED THE ARANYAPRATHET CAMP THE FOLLOWING DAY SAID THAT THE REFUGEES THERE SEEMED ALMOST RELIEVED THAT THE GROUP OF FOUR WOULD NO LONGER BE ABLE TO CONTINUE TO HARASS THEM. THEY REITERATED THAT THE ACTION TO APPREHEND THE FOUR WAS TAKEN AT THEIR REQUEST.

6. THE UNHCR HAS ALSO INVESTIGATED THE ALLEGED MURDER OF FIVE PERSONS IN OR NEAR THE KHMER REFUGEE CAMP IN PRASAT DISTRICT OF SURIN PROVINCE. TWO MEN, YOO REE AND JIEW MOONEE, WERE MURDERED AT THE CAMP NOVEMBER 13, 1977. ANOTHER MAN, LAW KIM MENG, UNDERWENT THE SAME
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FATE ON APRIL 20, 1978. AFTER INVESTIGATING THE SITUATION, JAMIESON GAVE THE OPINION THAT THE DEATHS OF THESE THREE PERSONS RESULTED FROM QUARRELS AMONG THE REFUGEES THEMSELVES. HE COMMENTED THAT IN A CAMP WITH

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9222

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 3 BANGKOK 23043

LIMDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y PARA 8 LINE 4 (1975 VICE 1075)

A FOPULATION OF NEARLY 5000 PERSONS, SUCH ACTS ARE
ALMOST BOUND TO OCCUR.

7. THE OTHER INCIDENT TOOK PLACE ONE KILOMETER OUTSIDE THE CAMP THE NIGHT OF JANUARY 27-28, 1978. TWO GIRLS, YIEM DOM (16) AND PHUK PHOON (13) LEFT FOR THE CAMP THAT EVENING APPARENTLY IN SEARCH OF FOOD. A GROUP OF THAI MEN ALLEGEDLY ACCOSTED THEM, RAPED THEM, AND CLUBBED THEM TO DEATH. THE SUBSEQUENT POLICE INVESTIGATION WAS INCONCLUSIVE.

8. REFUGEES IN THE SIKHIU JAIL ARE TREATED "WORSE THAN ANIMALS": THE SIKHIU DETENTION CENTER (ADJACENT TO THE REFUGEE CAMP FOR ABOUT 1300 VIETNAMESE REFUGEES FROM LAOS) CURRENTLY HOLDS 126 POST-1975 INDOCHINESE REFUGEES. THEY INCLUDE 77 CAMBODIANS, 47 LAO, AND 2 OF 3 VIETNAMESE SOLDIERS WHO ENDED UP IN SONGKHLA AFTER THEIR BOAT LOST POWER OFF CAMAU AND DRIFTED ACROSS THE GULF OF THAILAND (ALL THREE VIETNAMESE ESCAPED FROM THE SIKHIU JAIL, BUT TWO WERE RECAPTURED). JAMIESON SAID THAT THE CAMBODIANS WERE THE KHMER ROUGE DEFECTORS AMONG

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A GROUP OF 98 TRANSFERRED FROM SURIN TO SIKHIU. THE OTHER 22 HAVE ALREADY GONE TO FRANCE. (77 BANGKOK 33880 REPORTED THAT 102 KHMER FROM SURIN WERE TRANSFERRED TO SIKHIU JAIL, BUT TWO WERE RECAPTURED). JAMIESON SAID WERE "TROUBLEMAKERS." EVEN WHILE IN SURIN, THESE 77 HAD, FOR THEIR OWN PROTECTION, BEEN ISOLATED BY BARBED WIRE FROM THE REST OF THE REFUGEES. WHILE SIKHIU CENTER OFFICIALS WERE ORIGINALLY RIGOROUS IN THEIR HANDLING OF BOTH THE CAMBODIANS AND THE LAO, JAMIESON SAYS THEY LATER REALIZED THAT BOTH GROUPS ARE AMENABLE AND COOPERATIVE. THEY ARE NOW RELATIVELY RELAXED IN THEIR TREATMENT OF THEM.

9. "AFTER QUESTIONING AT THE PRIMARY INTERROGATION CENTERS, A SUBSTANTIALLY HIGH NUMBER OF REFUGEES DISAPPEARS": WHEN KHMER REFUGEES CROSS THE BORDER INTO THAILAND, THEY NORMALLY FIND THEMSELVES FAR FROM A REFUGEE CAMP. THEY INITIALLY WIND UP IN A BORDER PATROL POLICE OUTPOST, A MILITARY BASE, OR A DISTRICT HEAD-QUARTERS NEAR THE BORDER. AT THAT STAGE, THE TERM FOR THEM IS "BORDER CROSSERS." GOODYEAR SAID THAT EVERY COUNTRY RESERVES THE RIGHT TO APPLY SECURITY PROCEDURES TO INDIVIDUALS CROSSING ITS BORDERS ILLEGALLY. SOME OF THESE INDIVIDUALS WERE DETAINED UP TO SIX WEEKS PREVIOUSLY THE TIME NOW IS NORMALLY FROM 10 DAYS TO 2 WEEKS BEFORE THEY MOVE TO A REFUGEE CAMP OR THE BURIRAM DETENTION CENTER.

10. REFUGEES ARE SOMETIMES TURNED OVER TO KHMER ROUGE BORDER GUARDS FOR A SMALL PRICE BY THAIPOLICE: IN LATE 1976, PROBABLY IN OCTOBER OR NOVEMBER, THAI AUTHORITIES RETURNED 26 CAMBODIANS TO THE KHMER AT
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ARANYAPRATHET. REFUGEES WHO CAME OUT SUBSEQUENTLY REPORTED THAT THE KHMER HAD TAKEN ALL 26 A FEW KILOMETERS INSIDE THE BORDER AND EXECUTED THEM. SINCE THAT TIME, THE UNHCR IS UNAWARE OF ANY INCIDENTS OF FORCIBLE KHMER REPATRIATION. THE ONLY REMOTELY RELATED INCIDENT IS OF TWO KHMER ROUGE EARLY THIS YEAR CARRYING AK 47S WHO WERE FORCED INTO SURIN PROVINCE OF NORTHEAST THAILAND WITH OTHER WOULD-BE KHMER REFUGEES. THE DISTRICT OFFICER, NOT AGAINST THEIR WILL, SENT THEM BACK TO KAMPUCHEA WITH THEIR WEAPONS.

11. THE GOVERNMENT OF KAMPUCHEA HAS REPORTEDLY ABOLISHED CURRENCY. GOODYEAR SAID THAT IT IS DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE THAT UNPAID BORDER GUARDS WOULD EXPEND MONEY OR TRINKETS TO GAIN BACK REFUGEES.

12. "DIVERSION OF 40 PERCENT OF FOREIGN ASSISTANCE INTO THE HANDS OF CORRUPT THAI OFFICIALS": WHILE GOODYEAR NOTED THAT SOME MINOR MALFEASANCE AT THE END OF THE DELIVERY LINE FOR FOOD COULD OCCUR, THERE IS NO DIVERSION OF FUNDS. FIELD OFFICERS CONSTANTLY FOLLOW UP RUMORS OF CORRUPTION. UNHCR GENEVA SENDS A TEAM ANNUALLY TO THAILAND TO CONDUCT A METICULOUS AUDIT OF EXPENDITURES, DOWN TO WEIGHING RICE RATIONS AT THE CAMPS. THE CURRENT SUBSISTENCE FIGURES FOR A REFUGEE ARE 3.417 BAHT (ABOUT 17 CENTS) FOR AN ADULT, AND 2.6 BAHT (ABOUT 13 CENTS) FOR A CHILD. IF 40 PERCENT OF THAT ALLOCATION WERE SIPHONED OFF, THE REFUGEES WOULD STARVE. ADDITIONALLY, THE "THEORETHICALLY" ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES OF THE REFUGEES IN THE CAMPS REPORT REGULARLY TO THE UNHCR ON THE QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF THE FOOD.

13. IN SUM, GOODYEAR BELIEVED THAT REFUGEES IN THE UNITED STATES ARE PASSING ON EXAGGERATED AND DATED INFORMATION. GOODYEAR AND JAMIESON SAID THAT THE CURRENT PICTURE IN ALL THE CAMPS IS ONE OF RELAXATION OF TENSION AND ACCEPTANCE
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OF NEWCOMERS. THIS CHANGE OF ATTITUDE DATES FROM THE TIME THE PRIME MINISTER ADDRESSED HIMSELF TO THE

REFUGEE SITUATION EARLY THIS YEAR. A CLEAR WATERSHED HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED, CERTAINLY FROM MARCH-APRIL PERIOD OF THIS YEAR.

14. COMMENT: THE INFORMATION THAT THE UNHCR PROVIDED OFTEN COMES FROM SECOND-HAND REPORTS WHICH BY THEIR NATURE ALMOST ALWAYS GO UNCONFIRMED. THE MOST SERIOUS OF THESE IS THAT FROM LATE 1977 UNTIL EARLY 1978

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9223

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 03 OF 03 BANGKOK 23043

LIMDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT - ADDING MISSING LINE)

THERE MAY HAVE BEEN A NUMBER OF INCIDENTS IN WHICH NEWLY ARRIVING KHMER WERE KILLED. WE HAVE NO CONFIRMED REPORTS AFTER LATE 1976 THAT KHMER REFUGEES HAVE BEEN HANDED BACK TO KAMPUCHEAN OFFICIALS FOR MONEY OR OTHERWISE. TREATMENT IN THE CAMPS IS BY AND LARGE ACCEPTABLE. WE BELIEVE THAT IN LIGHT OF FREQUENT VISITS TO THE LARGER CAMPS BY THE UNHCR, VARIOUS EMBASSIES, OTHER FOREIGN ORGANIZATIONS, AND THE PRESS, MAJOR CONTINUING CAMP ABUSES WOULD COME TO LIGHT. AT THE MOST VISITED REFUGEE CAMP IN THAILAND, ARANYAPRATHET, THE MAJOR COMPLAINTS OF THE REFUGEES CENTER ON A WATER SHORTAGE, THE HIGH INCIDENCE OF MALARIA, AND THE LACK OF LAW AND ORDER WITHIN THE CAMP WHICH PERMITS SOME REFUGEES TO PREY ON OTHERS. IN SUM, ALTHOUGH WE CANNOT RULE OUT ISOLATED INCIDENTS ALONG THE BORDER, THERE DOES NOT SEEM TO BE A PATTERN OF ABUSES DIRECTED AT NEWLY ARRIVING KHMER. THE CHIEF DANGER TO THEIR LIVES REMAINS THAT WHILE CROSSING THE FRONTIER THEY MAY BE FIRED ON.

15. WE RECOMMEND THAT THE DEPARTMENT PROTECT THE
CONFIDENTIALITY OF THE UNHCR VIEWS EXPRESSED ABOVE, AND
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USE THE INFORMATION FOR BACKGROUND ONLY WITHOUT
RELEASING THE CONTENTS. ABRAMOWITZ

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Message Attributes

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